

Moody reflections

HE IS YOUNG, HAS AN INTENSE EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE WHEN HE TALKS about his art and rarely smiles. He has travelled extensively visiting far away places like Laos, Thailand, Europe, Kathmandu and Tibet. During his travels he loves to collect antique art objects that he later uses in his paintings. He believes in the importance of freedom and individuality and wants to do something original and different. The person in question is Imad Bechara, a Lebanese artist whose works are currently on show at the Green Art gallery in Jumeirah. The exhibition is expected to continue till Feb 9.

A mixture of the abstract and the figurative the paintings in acrylic contain several shapes that are suggestive of the human form. What strikes the viewer is the wealth of movement and emotion in the works. While some figures droop with the weight of sorrow and depression, others seem to float on a wave of liberation and joy. Bechara agrees that, "there is a lot of movement in my paintings. That is my way of expressing myself." He pauses before adding thoughtfully, "I am not only expressing myself. I am also expressing the viewer." He feels that once a painting has been finished its completion depends on the response it can generate from a viewer.

"The human figures I portray express my feelings about life," he says adding that his work reflects his moods. "I think a lot about life and people. I meditate and there is a lot of concentration. The emotion takes over me. The brush moves and the painting is born." Bechara adds that he often listens to music — relaxation music and he is lost in a world of his own as he paints. "I talk with the canvas and totally lose myself in it for about 3-4 hours I switch off from the

Imad Bechara's exhibition at the Green Art gallery concentrates on suggestions of human figures to unleash a flood of emotion on the unsuspecting viewer

by Sudha Chandran

Photographs by Arun Jacob Thomas and Rajan

world around." The expression on his face is intense and his eyes are penetrating. He admits that he rarely paints when people are around. "Even if my wife comes into the room, I don't feel she is there."

Interestingly, despite the intense concentration, Bechara says that painting for him is a relaxation. Often he finds himself painting through the night and feels relaxed and at ease when it is over. He points to a painting — a study in deep blues and greens. "I was very disturbed through the night. Had a lot of bad thoughts and could not sleep. So I began to paint and only when it was over did I feel a sense of quiet. Then I slept like a baby." He smiles a rare smile.

One is fascinated by his use of colours which include a lot of blues and greens and rare blobs of warmer shades. "I don't know why I am stuck on the blue." Bechara admits that colours do mean a lot to him. An interior artist by profession, Bechara runs his own interior arts firm in Dubai and painting he says, is just his hobby. Having



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grown up in Beirut, he has lived through the difficult times in his country. What does he feel about it all? "My paintings had horrible figures then. There used to be a lot of anger and frustration. It was not anger from outside. It was all inside me and it had to be expressed. I don't paint like that anymore."

Time and again in the course of the conversation he expresses his need to do something original and individual. Admitting that this was one of the reasons why he started his own firm, "I don't like working for someone else," he strongly asserts the importance of freedom. "I always like to feel free. I feel



every artist should be free. A lot of people accept what is given to them but if you listen to yourself you feel free." He is silent for a while then he muses thoughtfully, "Freedom is difficult to achieve but you can create your own limited freedom, by turning inward and listening to yourself."

The walls of the gallery are lined with paintings that are made on various textures and materials. Bechara admits that his interest in art includes research in the techniques of painting and the need to do

something new and different.

As he stresses on the need for freedom, insists on individuality and talks about his travels to various off beat locations, you realise that Bechara is driven by a deep quest for something. Perhaps the artist himself is unaware of the search and the desire to find himself, because he shrugs off his travels as "a lot of fun and adventure." But he chooses time and again to move away from the trodden paths in the hope of finding something "original and different" to do.